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SUBJECT: FRANCE/DARFUR: MFA CURBS MOVEMENT OF DARFUR
REJECTIONIST

REF: A. PARIS 3129 B. 9/7 & 9/8 PARIS POINTS

Classified By: Acting Political Counselor Bruce Turner. Reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) JEM leader and Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) rejectionist Khalil Ibrahim is effectively grounded on European territory (Schengen Zone), after the French MFA intervened in August with national civil authorities to block renewal of his laissez-passer, AF DAS-Equivalent Helen Le Gal informed Africa Watcher on September 15. Ibrahim, who had gained refugee status and thus a French residence permit in December 2003 over MFA objections, returned to France from Africa in order to renew his status -- usually a routine measure. The MFA however put a hold on the application on the grounds that Ibrahim, as a DPA rejectionist, stands in violation of UNSCR 1591 (2005), paragraph 3 (c), which threatens sanctions against individuals who impede the peace process (Ref A). Ibrahim retains his residence permit for France, which in principle still allows him to circulate within EU countries that are party to the Schengen Convention.

¶2. (C) With Ibrahim unable to travel freely, JEM figures are now trekking to France to receive Ibrahim's instructions. The subsequent visa applications were revealing reading, Le Gal commented. For instance, a JEM "General" listed his income as a 6,000 euro monthly salary from the Darfur Ceasefire Commission. Le Gal took umbrage at how parties to the Darfur catastrophe, both rebel factions and the Government of Sudan, were exploiting EU assistance. Le Gal found particularly scandalizing how the Government of Sudan had taken petrol purchased with EU funds for the use of AMIS in order to supply Sudanese helicopters in the ongoing military offensive in Darfur. She characterized AMIS as a disaster that continued to worsen. A transition to a UN operation was imperative.

¶3. (C/NF) Le Gal stated that the MFA was having difficulty in scheduling a visit to Sudan by FM Douste-Blazy. Sudan has already twice rebuffed Douste-Blazy, she said, since his September 6 declaration that the Darfur crisis was a "veritable genocide" (Ref B). Le Gal called Douste-Blazy's statement an unscripted departure from how European states have managed policy on Darfur. She confided that MFA Special Adviser on African affairs Nathalie Delapalme and others in the French government were delicately trying to mitigate the impact of Douste-Blazy's statement.

¶4. (C) Le Gal said she expected the Khartoum government would eventually yield to the logic of UNSCR 1706 and the transition to a UN force in Darfur, but she implied that her view was not shared by all within the MFA. She conceded that the SC-mandated ICC investigations in Darfur were not conducive to Khartoum's cooperation. More fundamental to

Khartoum's resistance however were misgivings about an expanded international presence in the run-up to 2008-2009 legislative and presidential elections. Bashir and his regime wanted to operate with a free hand in order to maintain, by "democratic means", their grip on power.

15. (C/NF) Comment: Le Gal has repeatedly stressed French MFA commitment to a rapid UN re-hatting of AMIS forces in Darfur. She complained pointedly about the French UNSC expert's personal handling of Sudan negotiations (as well as on DRC sanctions), asserting that he had misrepresented official French positions, provoked unfruitful controversies and, above all, created unhelpful ambiguity about French commitment to a speedy transition to UN control. For instance, the proposal that the UNSC authorize formed civpol units to protect IDPs in Chad had absolutely no authorization, she claimed. It represented a personal contribution that far exceeded MFA instructions to obtain a simple reference to the regional impact of the Darfur conflict, she stated, and, one wonders, perhaps went beyond what the MFA was ready to undertake on behalf of President Deby in Chad. Le Gal, who considers herself a seasoned multilateralist, albeit in an EU rather than a UN context, was scathing in her criticisms. Compounding her irritation, the MFA African and International Organizations bureau-equivalents did not always sing off the same sheet of music on Darfur; moreover, the French delegation in New York is known to exercise great autonomy in its everyday business, often dealing (and dueling) directly with advisers to the French Presidency, unconstrained by ordinary MFA hierarchies.

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